IN THE CLAIMS

What is claimed is:

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- 1. A method for monitoring a plurality of devices in a common environment, comprising the steps of:
- 3 receiving usage information from one of the devices;
- 4 storing the usage information on a memory device of a computer;
- 5 using the computer to automatically access a remote database containing
- 6 information regarding the device;
- 7 transmitting the stored usage information to the remote database;
- 8 receiving the information from the remote database; and
- generating an action to be taken by the device using the information from
- 10 the remote database and the stored usage information.
 - 1 2. The method of claim 1, wherein the usage information comprises:
- 2 an average length of time the device is in operation over a period of time;
- a number of occasions the device is in operation over the period of time;
- a number of times maintenance was performed on the device over the
- 5 period of time; and
- 6 types of maintenance operations that were performed on the device over
- 7 the period of time.
- 1 3. The method of claim 2, wherein the remote database is accessed by the
- 2 computer via an internet connection.

- 1 4. The method of claim wherein the remote database is accessed by the
- 2 computer via a point-to-point connection between the computer and the
- 3 database.
- 1 5. The method of claim 1, wherein the step of connecting is automatically
- 2 performed at regular intervals.

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- 6. The method of claim 1, wherein the remote database is updated at
- 2 intervals using information generated by a manufacturer of a device of the
- 3 plurality of devices.
- 1 7. The method of claim 1, wherein the devices are home appliances and
- 2 wherein the common environment is a house.
- 1 8. The method of claim 1, wherein the devices are items of manufacturing
- 2 equipment and wherein the common environment is a manufacturing facility.
- 1 9. The method of claim 1, wherein the step of generating a suggested action
- 2 comprises generating a whitten report.

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- 10. A computer readable medium having stored thereon instructions which when executed cause a computer to perform the steps of:
- 3 receiving usage information from one of a plurality of devices operating
- 4 in an environment;
- storing the usage information on a memory device of the computer;

6	connecting the computer to a remote database, wherein the remote
7	database contains information regarding the device;
8	receiving the information from the remote database; and
9	generating a suggested action to be taken to maintain the device using the
10	information from the remote database and the stored usage information.
1	11. The computer readable medium of claim 10, wherein the stored
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	instructions, when executed, further cause the computer to perform the steps of:
3	receiving an identification of a device when the device is initially placed in
4	the environment; and
5	storing the identification such that it is associated with usage information
6	collected from the device.
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1	12. The computer readable medium of claim 11, wherein the stored
2	instructions, when executed, further cause the computer to perform the step of,
3	after connecting the computer to the remote database, accessing information
4	related to the device in the remote database using the identification.
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)	13. The computer readable medium of claim 10, wherein the usage
2	information comprises: \
3	an average length of time the device is in operation over a period of time;
4	a number of occasions the device is in operation over the period of time;
5	a number of times maintenance was performed on the device over the
6	period of time; and
7	types of maintenance operations that were performed on the device over
8	the period of time.

- 1 14. The computer readable medium of claim 10, wherein the step of
- 2 connecting the computer to a remote database comprises initiating an internet
- 3 connection at regular intervals.
- 1 15. The computer readable medium of claim 10, wherein the step of
- 2 connecting the computer to a remote database comprises initiating a point-to-
- 3 point connection to the remote database at regular intervals.
- 1 16. The computer readable medium of claim 10, wherein the step of
- 2 connecting the computer to a remote database comprises initiating an internet
- 3 connection.
 - 17. The computer readable medium of claim 10, wherein the plurality of
- 2 devices comprises home appliances and wherein the environment is a house.
- 1 18. The computer readable medium of claim 10, wherein the plurality of
- 2 devices comprises items of manufacturing equipment and wherein the
- 3 environment is a manufacturing facility
- 1 19. The computer readable medium of claim 10, wherein the step of
- 2 generating a suggested action comprises generating a written report.
- 20. A system for automatically maintaining and controlling a plurality of devices, comprising:

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3	a computer controller including a memory coupled to each of the plurality
4	of devices;
5	a transmission line that is coupled to a remote database containing
6	information regarding each of the plurality of devices; and
7	a software program stored on the memory that directs the automatic
8	maintenance and control of the devices, including directing the computer
9	controller to periodically connect to the remote database via the transmission
10	line, the software program uploading information collected from the devices and
11	downloading the information regarding each of the plurality of devices.
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1	21. The system of claim 20, wherein the devices comprise home appliances
2	and entertainment equipment.
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1	22. The system of claim 20, wherein the remote database comprises
2	information compiled by manufacturers of devices, including information
3	collected by the computer controller and uploaded to the database.
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e)	23. The system of claim 22, wherein each of the plurality of devices includes
2	an identifier and wherein the computer controller accesses a record in the
3	database that contains information specific to one of the plurality of devices by
4	transmitting the identifier.
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1	24. The system of claim 28, wherein the computer controller accesses the
2	remote database via an internet connection.

- 1 25. The system of claim 23, wherein the computer controller accesses the
- 2 remote database via a point to point connection.

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